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Letter dated 3 September 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you the attached concept paper for the upcoming Security Council summit in connection with "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts: foreign terrorist fighters", to be held on 25 September 2014 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Samantha J. **Power**
United States Ambassador to the United Nations

14-60374 (E) 050914

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Annex to the letter dated 3 September 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Security Council summit on foreign terrorist fighters

Concept paper

In September, United States President Barack Obama will host a Security Council summit at the level of Heads of Government to focus on the acute and emerging threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. At the summit, we propose that the Council adopt a resolution to address the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and emphasize the need for States to have the tools and mobilize the resources to help prevent the travel of foreign terrorist fighters and protect States from the resulting terrorist threat. Recognizing the gravity and complexity of the threat, the Council should also underscore the critical need both to counter the violent extremism that fuels foreign terrorist fighter radicalization, and establish effective means to degrade the ability of foreign terrorist fighters to commit terrorist acts.

Foreign terrorist fighters: a growing threat

Although the problem of terrorists travelling to foreign conflicts is not new, the threat has recently become grave, with an unprecedented flow of fighters and facilitation networks fuelling multiple conflicts worldwide, such as in the Horn of Africa, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere. A surge of foreign terrorist fighters has played a pernicious role in the Middle East, with thousands of fighters from the region and beyond joining terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Al-Nusra Front (ANF). Foreign terrorist fighters not only exacerbate existing conflicts, but also often return home possessing new skills and connections, increasing the threat of home-grown terrorist attacks. Terrorist networks forged in the conflicts of today could pose a threat for decades to come.

As this threat grows, the international community's response must evolve and keep pace. States need appropriate laws and regulations to deal with foreign terrorist fighters within their territories, as well as appropriate measures to help prevent the transit of foreign terrorist fighters across borders. More must be done to mobilize the resources and develop tools at the national, regional and international levels to address this phenomenon, as well as to ensure that there are proper mechanisms in place for States to prevent and counter the radicalization of potential foreign terrorist fighters. A high-level Council summit would give these efforts a major boost, galvanizing activity at all levels to address the foreign terrorist fighter problem and improve coordination among Governments and multilateral institutions.

A framework to address the foreign terrorist fighter threat

As this threat evolves, the Security Council should sharpen and reinforce the existing counter-terrorism framework to address more directly the foreign terrorist fighter threat. Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) already imposes obligations

on States to take certain actions to suppress terrorism and the recruitment of members to terrorist groups, prevent the movement of terrorists, and bring terrorists to justice. A new resolution could expand upon and clarify these obligations with respect to foreign terrorist fighters, as well as reinforce norms and expectations for State cooperation and other actions to deal with foreign terrorist fighters.

The foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon cannot be addressed through security means alone. The Security Council should recognize countering violent extremism as an essential element of the international community's response to this threat. Countering violent extremism aims to limit recruits to terrorism by reducing sympathy and support for violent extremism by building resilience among communities most at risk of recruitment and radicalization to violence; countering violent extremist narratives and messaging; supporting and coordinating efforts to better understand the phenomenon of violent extremism; and building the capacity of partner nations and civil society to counter violent extremism. Through a broad, "whole of society" approach, efforts aimed at countering violent extremism are critical to stem recruitment and address the needs of returning foreign terrorist fighters (to ensure that they are not radicalized to violence in their home country or third countries). The Council should deeply integrate emerging good practices with respect to countering violent extremism into its response to the foreign terrorist fighter threat and encourage devoting resources to these efforts. For example, the Council could highlight: community-based mechanisms to counter violent extremism (e.g., elevating the roles of civil society, women, and victims of terrorism in countering violent extremism); community engagement and community-oriented policing; rehabilitation; prison reform; education; and public awareness programmes to reduce the appeal of recruitment and radicalization to violence.

Deepening multilateral engagement on foreign terrorist fighters

To deepen United Nations engagement in this field, the Council should request its principal counter-terrorism bodies — the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team — to focus on the foreign terrorist fighter threat, including by assessing national efforts to apply existing international legal obligations against this threat. As part of this effort, the Council should also ask these bodies to submit a report to the Council within six months, including an assessment of national and multilateral efforts and recommendations to strengthen them.

Also as part of the summit, the Council would seek to deepen coordination with other multilateral bodies working in this field, such as the Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force and its 31 entities, the United Nations Counter-terrorism Centre, the United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). A planned Global Counterterrorism Forum ministerial meeting either just prior to or after the Security Council event — which United States Secretary of State John Kerry will co-chair — will also address the foreign terrorist fighter threat, allowing the Council's high-level summit to reinforce and catalyse this other major multilateral initiative and serve as a capstone to the global effort.

September high-level Council thematic summit meeting

To frame the Council discussion in September, the Council should ask the Secretary-General to brief on the scope of the foreign terrorist fighter problem, its effect on current conflicts and the efforts of the United Nations to address it. The Heads of Government of Security Council members would then be invited to speak (no other Member States would speak). Council members may wish to address:

- Specific challenges they face in securing their borders against foreign terrorist fighters and prosecuting individuals who seek to join terrorist organizations;
- Lessons learned and best practices for countering violent extremism and ways to leverage resources for countering violent extremism;
- Areas in which they may have special capacity to assist others to improve border security or provide assistance to address the foreign terrorist fighter threat and counter violent extremism; and
- Views on the ability of the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations to bolster State capacity to respond to the foreign terrorist fighter problem.

As follow-up to this discussion, the Security Council would revisit this issue in consultations within six months.